



Communicable Disease Branch Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Weekly Key Points

March 16, 2021

The North Carolina Division of Public Health (NC DPH) Communicable Disease Branch will be releasing COVID-19 weekly key points that includes information discussed on the weekly Tuesday Local Health Department call. Recordings of the call will not be made available; please use the information below as a summary of the topics presented on the call. As guidance changes, please use the most recent information provided. For questions, contact the NC DPH Communicable Disease Branch 24/7 Epidemiologist on Call at **919-733-3419**.

Important Updates

- **New:** NCDHHS_LHD Weekly Webinar_03.16.2021.pdf (file attached)
- **New:** COVID 19 At Home Testing Guidance 3.16.2021 (file attached)
- **New:** Homebound vaccine county capacity.xlsx (file attached)
- **Updated:** Local Health Vaccine FAQ - 3.12.21.pdf (file attached)
- **Updated:** Find My Testing Place (file attached)

State Epidemiologist Update

- COVID-19 activity has been declining but we are starting to see a leveling off recently in some metrics – specifically incidence rates and percent positive.
- CDC issued [updated guidance](#) to indicate that fully vaccinated people with no COVID-like symptoms do not need to quarantine or be tested following an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 (3-month timeframe has been removed).
 - Fully vaccinated residents of non-healthcare congregate settings (e.g., correctional and detention facilities, group homes) should continue to quarantine for 14 days and be tested for SARS-CoV-2 following an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.
 - Fully vaccinated employees of non-healthcare congregate settings and other high-density workplaces (e.g., meat and poultry processing and manufacturing plants) with no COVID-like symptoms do not need to quarantine following an exposure; however testing following an exposure and through routine workplace screening programs (if present) is still recommended.
- NCDHHS is clarifying that [options to reduce duration of quarantine](#) posted by CDC can be used for exposures in K-12 school settings at the discretion of the local health department.

Long-term Care Facilities – Visitation Guidance Updates

All licensed long-term care facilities regardless of size must allow visitation to the maximum extent possible following principles outlined in both CDC guidance [here](#) and CMS Visitation guidance [here](#).

- Outdoor visitation continues to be preferred even when the resident and visitor are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.
- Facilities **should allow responsible indoor visitation at all times**, regardless of vaccination status of the resident or visitor, except for the following scenarios:



- Unvaccinated residents if the COVID-19 county positivity rate is > 10% AND <70% of residents in the facility are fully vaccinated;
- Residents with confirmed COVID-19 infection until they have met the [criteria to discontinue transmission-based precautions](#); or
- Residents in quarantine until they have met [criteria for release from quarantine](#).
- Visitation during an outbreak
 - If a new case of COVID-19 is identified, visitation should be suspended, and the facility should immediately conduct outbreak testing. If the testing reveals no additional COVID-19 cases in other areas/units of the facility, then visitation can resume in the unaffected areas/units.
 - If outbreak testing detects one or more COVID-19 cases in other units of the facility, the facility must stop visitation until it can meet criteria to end outbreak testing (*no new cases identified among staff or residents for at least 14 days since the most recent positive*).
- Residents who are fully vaccinated may choose to have close, physical contact with visitors if both parties wear well-fitted masks and perform hand-hygiene before and after contact.

Compassionate care visits **should be allowed at all times**, regardless of a resident's vaccination status, the county's COVID-19 positivity rate, or an outbreak.

Updated Work Restriction and Quarantine Guidance

- Fully vaccinated asymptomatic healthcare providers with [higher-risk exposures](#) do not need to be restricted from work for 14 days following exposure. For vaccinated healthcare providers who are immunocompromised, work restrictions should be considered following a higher-risk exposure.
- **Fully vaccinated** residents being admitted to a LTCF, or other post-acute care facility, do not require quarantine unless they have been in prolonged close contact with someone with SARS-CoV-2 infection in the prior 14 days.
- Fully vaccinated inpatients and residents in healthcare settings should continue to [quarantine](#) following prolonged close contact with someone with SARS-CoV-2 infection in the prior 14 days.
- For LTCF residents leaving the facility **for less than 24 hours**, quarantine **is not** recommended for any residents, unless there is prolonged close contact with someone with SARS-CoV-2 infection.

SLPH Update

BD Veritor

- If you responded to our survey to request BD Veritor instruments and tests, your instruments should be on their way to you shortly, if you have not already received them. Additionally, the first 3-months supply of tests should arrive before the end of this week.
- For those that did not opt to receive BD Veritor, or for those that did with urgent testing needs, please continue to request BinaxNOW for use at your health department or for redistribution within your community via our online request form. Areas of high need to consider:
 - Jails (NC DHHS participated in a webinar on 3/15 to inform jails of availability of testing resources from the state)
 - Long-term care facilities



- HBCUs, MSIs and community colleges
- K12 districts and schools (more on this below)
- Homeless shelters
- Farmworker camps

Update 1: SB220 signed

- Governor Cooper signed [Senate Bill 220](#) into law on March 11, 2021. Local boards of education are required to provide in-person learning for grades K – 5 in Plan A, and for grades 6 – 12 in either Plan B or Plan A, while meeting all health and safety requirements in the [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#).
- Local boards of education that offer Plan A to students enrolled in grades six through 12 shall, before beginning Plan A instruction, notify the NC Department of Health and Human Services and describe the unit's plan for moving to Plan A for grades 6-12.
- They must also work with the ABC Science Collaborative (through Duke/UNC) to track K-12 COVID data regularly.
- Notification form to NCDHHS is going live today

Update 2: K-12 Screening Testing Expansion

- NC DHHS expanded access to COVID-19 rapid testing to all K-12 schools on March 4th. Thanks to the great feedback and discussion with many of our schools throughout the state, we are now further expanding the ways in which schools may use tests. LEAs and charter schools may now request tests for additional screening testing scenarios outlined below.
 1. **Athletics:** Schools can do serial screening at a frequency determined by risk level and 1x screening within 48 hours prior to tournaments.
 2. **Spring Break:** NC DHHS advises against travelling for spring break. You can advise families and staff to be tested by a community provider before returning to school. Schools may choose to provide 1x screening testing within 48 hours prior to return to school.
 3. **Graduation and senior events:** NC DHHS recommends referring attendees to a community provider, such as [Find My Testing Place](#), for testing ahead of events. Schools may choose to do 1x screening testing within 48 hours prior to events.
 4. **Prom and other special events:** NC DHHS advises against holding traditional prom and other special events. If schools choose to host these events, they may conduct 1x screening testing for attendees within 48 hours prior to events.
- We are excited to provide this additional layer of protection for our students, teachers, staff and families. More information about testing guidance, requirements and request process can be found in the [NC DHHS K-12 COVID-19 Antigen Testing Interim Guidance](#). If you have additional questions, please contact our team at StrongSchoolsNC@dhhs.nc.gov.

CVMS Updates

Trainings on managing appointment scheduling have been scheduled for March 19th and March 26th at 10:00: CVMS Provider Portal 203 for Location Manager Profile - Managing Appointment Scheduling. More information about upcoming trainings can be found [here](#) .



Homebound Vaccinations

Key steps for vaccinating homebound individuals are the following:

- Identify homebound individuals. A list of partners willing to assist with identification will be shared with LHDs.
- Choose a vaccine model. For LHDs, this could include applying for an event allocation or doing on-going vaccinations.
- Plan with partners. This can include medical provider partners as vaccinators as well as partners to help identify, schedule, register, and provide transportation
- A list of best practices for vaccinating homebound individuals will be available in updated vaccine provider guidance to be released this week.

Farmworker Vaccinations

- Vaccine plan initiated statewide using local teams.
- Ongoing meetings with 28 counties identified as priority counties based on farmworkers density and H2-A migrant workers arrival time.
- Four vaccination approaches moving forward:
 - **Local team vaccine providers:** in clinic, special events, and in some cases on-farm.
 - **Optum-supported vaccine sites** in high need counties April-June (currently organizing in Sampson County).
 - **Exploring Optum-supported mobile service** for large employers (> 100 workers in 1 county).
 - **Exploring Optum-supported centralized location** to vaccinate H2A workers with J&J upon arrival (exploring possibility in Vass, NC).
- Please email us at vaccineforfarmworkers@dhhs.nc.gov if you have any questions.

Find My Testing Place

Please review the updated 'Find My Testing Place LHD' Excel file weekly to ensure information is up to date and accurate. Please send the updated files or any related questions to SVC_Covid-19TestingSites@dhhs.nc.gov